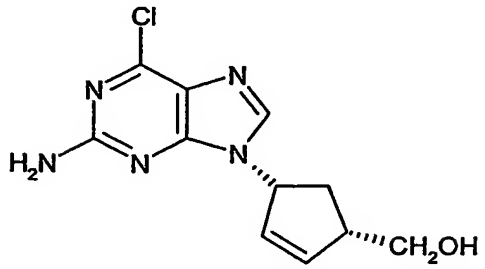
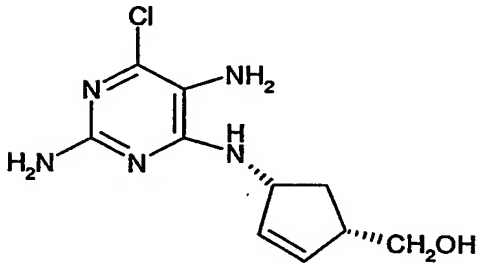
CLAIMS

1. A process for preparing a chloropurine compound of formula (I)



(I)

or a derivative thereof, which comprises ring closure of the compound of formula (VII) or a derivative thereof



(VII)

in the presence of catalytic acid and at least one equivalent of a formate derivative.

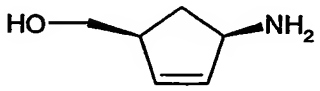
2. A process according to claim 1 wherein the acid is sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid, or an alkyl or arylsulfonic acid.

3. A process according to claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the acid is present in an amount of from 0.05 to 0.1 equivalents by mole based on the amount of the compound of formula (VII).

4. A process according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the formate derivative is triethylorthoformate.

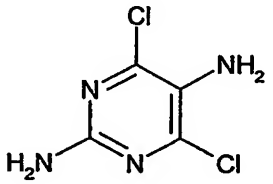
5. A process according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the formate derivative is present in an amount of 1 to 1.5 equivalents by mole based on the amount of the compound of formula (VII).

6. A process according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the compound of formula (VII) or a derivative thereof is prepared by condensing an amino alcohol of formula (IV) or a derivative thereof



(IV)

with a compound of formula (VIII) or a derivative thereof



(VIII)

in the presence of a base.

7. A process according to claim 6 wherein the condensation reaction is carried out in n-butanol in the presence of sodium bicarbonate.

8. A process according to claim 6 wherein the condensation reaction is carried out in n-butanol in the presence of anhydrous potassium carbonate.

9. A process according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the chloropurine compound of formula (I) or derivative thereof prepared by the ring closure reaction is converted *in situ* to abacavir or a derivative thereof.

10. A process according to any one of the preceding claims substantially as hereinbefore defined with reference to the Examples.